

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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R 031153Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6986

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 13125

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MASS, PFOR, TH

SUBJECT: EX-CAMBODIAN AND VIETNAMESE ASSETS IN THAILAND

REF: STATE 156081

1. REFTEL ASKS EMBASSY'S VIEWS ON KHUKRIT'S PROBABLE ATTITUDE TOWARD US REMOVAL OF EQUIPMENT DESTINED FOR THIRD COUNTRIES WITHOUT FORMAL RTG CONCURRENCE IN LIGHT HIS WISH THAT PLANES DID "NOT EXIST".

2. KHUKRIT'S POSITION WILL BE DETERMINED BY SEVERAL FACTORS. IF REMOVAL OF C-7'S AND F-5E AND TURN-OVER OF CERTAIN OTHER AIRCRAFT TO RTG HAS COME TO PUBLIC ATTENTION, KHUKRIT COULD EASILY DISCLAIM ANY CONNECTION WITH THESE ACTIONS AND ALLOW US (AND PERHAPS ALSO SUPREME COMMAND) TO TAKE FULL ONUS OF PUBLIC DISAPPROVAL. THIS WOULD OBVIOUSLY INHIBIT MOVEMENT OR TRANSFER OF ADDITIONAL AIRCRAFT.

ANOTHER FACTOR WOULD BE THE STATE OF BANGKOK'S RELATIONS WITH HANOI AND SAIGON, AND THE PROSPECTS FOR THESE RELATIONS, AT THE TIME THE QUESTION OF THE AIRCRAFT (AND ANY OTHER EQUIPMENT) IS RAISED.

3. IN SHORT, WE ARE DEALING WITH A VERY FRAGILE
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SITUATION. WHILE WE HAVE SUPREME COMMAND PRETTY

WELL LOCKED IN, KHUKRIT AND THE CIVILIAN SIDE OF
THE GOVERNMENT HADVE RETAINED FLEXIBILITY TO XJUMP
IN WHATEVER DIRECTION SUITS THEIR OVERALL PURPOSES
NEXT TIME THE ISSUE COMES UP.

4. AT THE SAME TIME, AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, WE BELIEVE THE
THAI CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP IS NOW BEGINNING TO REALIZE THAT IT
IS IN THAILAND'S OWN INTERESTS TO RETAIN GOOD WORKING
RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES. AS A RESULT, WHEN THIS
ISSUE NEXT COMES TO PUBLIC ATTENTION (AND IT MOST CERTAINLY WILL
AT SOME POINT), WE BELIEVE THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE THAT KHUKRIT
WILL PASS IT OFF WITH A QUIP TO THE PRESS AND ATTEMPT TO
DOWNPLAY THE WHOLE MATTER.

5. EVEN THOUGH WE RECOGNIZE THERE IS SOME RISK, WE ARE
CONVINCED THAT IT IS BEST TO PROCEED ALONG THE LINES WE
SUGGESTED EARLIER. ANY WAY WE SLICE IT, THESE PLANES WILL
CAUSE SOME FURTHER IRRITATION IN THAI-U.S. RELATIONS, AND WE
BELIEVE ON BALANCE IT IS PREFERABLE TO GET THIS OVER WITH
AS NEATLY AND QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. SOME OF THE PLANES WHICH HAVE
NOW BECOME UNSERVICEABLE WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO BE DESTROYED
HERE. WE WILL ARRANGE TO PHOTOGRAPH THIS PROCESS AND, IF NEED
BE, WE CAN PUBLICIZE THIS FACT AND DISCREETLY CREATE THE IMPRESSION
THAT THE JUNK REMAINING AFTER THE MIDWAY SAILED HAS BEEN
DESTROYED.
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